STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

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GOVERNOR

MICHIGAN Department of
Education

MICHAEL P. FLANAGAN
SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 10, 2008

TO: Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents
Public School Academy Administrators
Secondary School Principals

FROM: Sally Vaughn, Ph.D., Deputy Superintendent/Chief Academic Officer,
Michigan Department of Education (MDE)

Margaret M. Ropp, Ph.D., Director, Center for Educational Performance
and Information (CEPI)

SUBJECT: Graduation/Dropout Review and Comment Application Release –
April 1, 2008 (GAD Memo #1)

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that the Graduation/Dropout Review and Comment Application (GAD) is scheduled to be released in early April 2008 to give districts and schools/facilities the opportunity to review their 2007 cohort of students and make requests for minimal changes. Districts will have four weeks after the application opens to do the following:

1.   Review data they submitted previously via the Single Record Student Database (SRSD),

2.   Assemble required documentation for adjustment requests, and

3.   Complete requests for adjustments via the GAD application.

When the four-week review period has ended, the application will be closed to districts, and the application will be opened for an additional four weeks in May for review and approval of adjustment requests. At the end of the approval window, CEPI will calculate the building and district graduation rates and make them available via the GAD.

Background
In correspondence dated November 2, 2006, May 31, 2007, August 22, 2007, and December 7, 2007, CEPI and MDE notified you that, in order to comply with *The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* and to meet the national standards set forth in the

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National Governors Association (NGA) "Graduation Counts Compact," the state of Michigan must move to an accountability system for high schools in which a **graduation rate includes only "on-time" graduates who earn diplomas in four years**.

Michigan will report graduation rates for the first time using the cohort method for the 2007 cohort class. Graduation rates will be calculated by tracking individual students who first enrolled in ninth grade in fall 2003, and graduated four years later with regular diplomas. The GAD will incorporate the final dispositions of all 2007 cohort students as last reported in the SRSD fall 2007 collection.

Take Action
To prepare for the opening of the GAD, we suggest the following actions:

1. **Review documentation:** It is very important for you and your staff to obtain and become familiar with the information related to the graduation and dropout rates. The documentation is located on the CEPI Web site. From the CEPI home page, at www.michigan.gov/cepi, click on "Graduation Cohort" on the right-hand Quick Links navigation bar.

2. **Review your district's authorized user(s):** It is important to ensure that you have appointed at least one individual who is responsible for accessing the application. In order to access the GAD, a security agreement must be completed and faxed to CEPI customer support. A copy of the security agreement is available on the CEPI Web site, as referenced in Item 2 above.

    Please note that there is now an additional role within the GAD for ISD auditors. All auditors who had SRSD authorization were automatically granted access to the GAD. If you require additional auditor access, the security agreement must be completed.

3. **Carefully review the final 2007 cohort report available via the GAD:** The GAD will have a mechanism to request to link Unique Identification Codes (UICs), request one-year cohort extensions on a case-by-case basis for specified student subgroups (see GAD Memo #2), and request exit status changes. You will want to thoroughly review your most recent report to begin determining what changes may need to be made in the GAD.

4. **Assemble documentation to support change requests:** It is the district's responsibility to ensure that appropriate documentation exists for all changes.

    a. Exit status code changes will be audited by your ISD. The district must have appropriate documentation for each exit status code change and provide this documentation to the ISD.

     b.   All requests for one-year cohort extensions will be audited by the appropriate MDE office (see form with GAD Memo #2). Documentation must be kept on file for each extension request.

     c.   UIC linking requests will be processed by CEPI for approvals.

Additional Support

1.   In the next few weeks, you will receive additional communications that will provide more detailed information concerning:

     a.   the submission period and access to the GAD

     b.   guidelines for one-year cohort extensions for children with disabilities (GAD Memo #2), limited-English-proficient students and students with significant medical emergencies

     c.   guidelines for necessary documentation related to exit status codes, and the ISD auditor role in approving requests to change exit status codes

2.   MDE and CEPI collaborated with Michigan School Public Relations Association (MSPRA) to develop a toolkit with talking points, a fact sheet, and frequently asked questions (FAQs) documents to assist districts in communicating internally and externally. This toolkit is available at http://www.michiganedusource.org/GradRatesToolkit.htm.

3.   The Michigan Pupil Accounting and Attendance Association (MPAAA) is hosting two training workshops at which MPAAA members, along with CEPI and MDE staff, will demonstrate the application and discuss the new documentation and audit requirements. The training has been scheduled for April 4 in Lansing and April 7 in Marquette, and all non-MPAAA members are welcome to register. For more information, please check the MPAAA Web site at www.mpaaa.org.

4.   CEPI will continue to post user support materials on the CEPI Website, including Web-based training, FAQs and an application user guide training.

If you have any questions regarding the GAD application, please contact CEPI at cepi@michigan.gov, or by telephoning 517-335-0505, and choosing option 3. If you need assistance in understanding the impact the new graduation rate will have on your district, please contact MDE's Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability at 877-560-8378. As always, thank you for your continued collaboration with CEPI and MDE.

CC: Public School Academy Authorizers
        GAD Application Authorized Users
        SRSD/UIC Application Authorized Users